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METIS NATION OF ALBERTA

LITERACY PROJECT REPORT

APRIL 1, 1992-AUGUST 31, 1993

Submitted by:
Phyllis Steeves
Project Coordinator
Framework Action Centre
Metis Nation of Alberta
August 31, 1993

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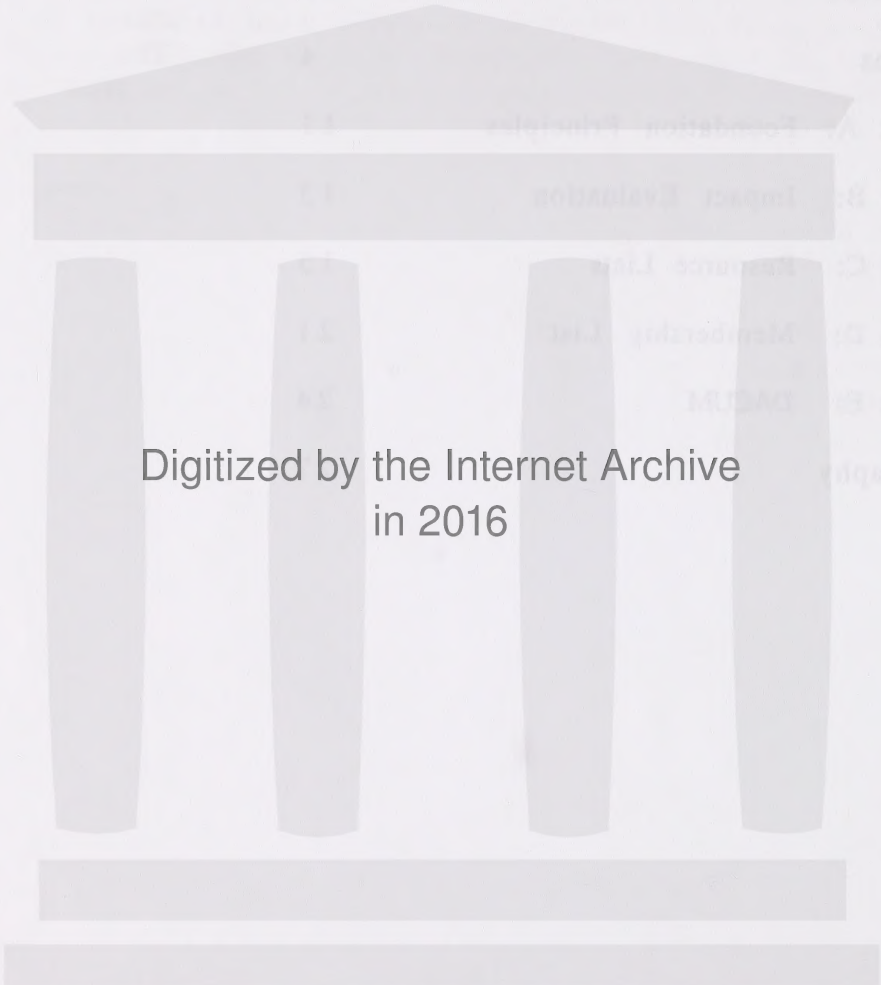

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SUMMARY

The Metis Nation of Alberta (MNA) Literacy Project set out to assess the nature and severity of the literacy problem among the Metis population. The assessment would assist the MNA in obtaining the long term goal of improving the functional literacy level of Metis adults.

Objectives were developed to provide specific actions to address the issues which surround the problem of low literacy skills. The methods selected to meet the objectives are outlined in this report along with the results of each.

Overall, the project has provided a step towards self empowerment, the theme of this phase of the project. The achievements of the project have been difficult to measure although the positive impact of the project within the Metis and literacy communities has been demonstrated in a number of ways. One positive impact has been the increased awareness and understanding of the problem within the structure of the MNA.

INTRODUCTION

Metis people possess a unique culture and history. The Metis Nation of Alberta Association recognizes this in its mandate; "On behalf of the Metis people of Alberta, the Metis Nation of Alberta Association is responsible for the development, promotion and enhancement of the Metis way of life in the Province of Alberta and for establishing programs that will advance Metis culture and ensure the social, economic and political well-being of Metis people."

The Metis Nation of Alberta had its beginnings in the early 1920's. Initially formed in 1928 as the Metis Association of Alberta, its major purpose was to secure land for Metis people. Improved education, health, social and economic conditions were also sought. In 1938 the Metis Population Betterment Act was passed by the provincial government. Land was reserved for colonies and by 1940 settlements were established. Eight[1] settlements remain in Alberta today.

After the settlements were established the association became inactive for several years. In the 1960's it was reactivated. The work of many years culminated in the signing of the Framework Agreement with the provincial government in 1987. This agreement resulted in five sub-committees; Forestry, Lands and Wildlife; Education/Advanced Education - Career Development and Employment; Family and Social Services; Economic Development & Trade; Housing.

The sub-committee of Education/Advanced Education - Career Development & Employment, comprised of representatives from both the provincial government and the Metis Nation, developed a three year work plan, with one of the major goals being to "Improve the functional literacy level of Metis adults." Thus the literacy project was born.

Initiated in February, 1991, the project has been successful in raising awareness of the literacy issue as it relates to the Metis people, both within the Metis community and the general public. The initial stages (Phase I & II) of the project are outlined in a previous report, which covers the period February 1, 1991 - March 31, 1992.

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[1]Paddle Prairie, Peavine, Gift Lake, East Prairie, Buffalo Lake, Kikino, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake.

This report will give an account of the activities undertaken during the third phase of the project, April 1, 1992 - August 31, 1993. This information will be provided through a look at the objectives, methods and results of the project. Finally, to provide a broad view of the project's focus a copy of the Foundation Principles[1] has been included.

[1]See Appendix A

The Objectives

Literacy - define the term as it relates to the Metis community

Literacy - The ability to use printed material to empower oneself to create and achieve one's goals and visions.
Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project

The task of defining the term literacy as it relates to the Metis community proved to be a challenge. It became evident, by the wide range of definitions encountered while researching the task, that the benchmarks which must be achieved to be "literate" varies among individuals/groups. Following are several definitions, each with their own merit, which helped to shape the definition above.

> Literacy - "the ability to read and write".
> The Concise Oxford Dictionary
> Webster's New World Dictionary

> Literacy - "a comprehensive and lifelong developmental process. Literacy is a personal, social, contextual, transactive, gender-related, and constructive process whereby we rewrite "the texts that we read in the texts of our lives, and keep on rewriting our lives in the light of those texts[1]"".
> Francis Kazemek, Literacy 2000

> "It is a transformative process whereby we have the potential to shape our lives and effect change in our world."
> J. Mezirow, 1978. Perspective Transformation. Adult Education, 28, 100-110.

> To be functionally literate is to have the reading, writing, and numeracy skills required to pursue one's own goals in society and to manage the print information encountered at work, at home and in the community.
> Adult Illiteracy in the United States: A Report to the Ford Foundation

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[1]Scholes, T. 1989. Protocols of Reading New Haven CT.: Yale University Press

The ability to read, write, comprehend and use mathematics adequately to satisfy whatever requirements the learner determines are important for his or her own life.

Manitoba Task Force on Literacy

The information processing skills necessary to use the printed material commonly encountered at work, at home and in the community. (Encompassing reading, writing and numeracy skills)

Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities - Statistics Canada

Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP)

The following, although not definitions of literacy, played a role in defining literacy as it relates to Metis people.

Aboriginal languages have been, for the most part, preserved as oral languages. What is important to be remembered, is said.

Those things that have to be known and skills that have to be learned within the community are transmitted through the teachings of the culture and the language. This knowledge is non-literate knowledge.

Literacy For Metis People: A National Strategy

"We must not confuse being non-literate with being illiterate and label our elders as unknowing because they are unread".

Christopher Lafontaine, Gabriel Dumont Institute

Illiterate - "unable to read, uneducated".

The Concise Oxford Dictionary

Illiterate - "uneducated; especially not knowing how to read or write"

Webster's New World Dictionary

> Vision - "a thing or idea perceived vividly in the imagination", "imaginative insight", "statesmanlike foresight; sagacity in planning".
>
> The Concise Oxford Dictionary

The definition developed for literacy as it relates to the Metis community ensures that no limitations or minimum standards inhibit the potential of the learner. It intends to encourage individuals to create and reach for their personal goals and determine for themselves if their ability to use printed materials is sufficient to "create and achieve one's goals and visions."

Interact with literacy groups provincially and nationally for consultation, information sharing and support

In addition to the wealth of information available and accessed through interaction with the various literacy groups, other benefits were also realized. One of these benefits is a greater awareness of the Metis community within the literacy field.

This awareness has been measured in part by an impact evaluation[1] which was mailed to a small sample group in the literacy field. The sample included board members, coordinators and administrators. Survey responses reveal progress has been made in increasing Metis visibility within the literacy field. They also reveal the need for resources which would assist literacy workers in differentiating between the Metis/Native communities in addition to providing basic information on history and culture. The following excerpts were taken from completed surveys:

> "My awareness of Aboriginal issues in general has been raised but not sufficiently to differentiate between Metis and Native communities."

> "I'm still not sure that I'm educated as to ways in which the 2 communities differ. I have the impression that Metis people may find themselves caught between the native culture and white culture and not quite fitting or perhaps not being accepted into either."

---

[1] See Appendix B

Provincially, involvement with the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta (LCA) and the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy (AAAL) has been maintained and strengthened. These involvements have resulted in tangible benefits to the Metis community.

One of the benefits realized was the acceptance, by the AAAL membership, of The Metis Nation of Alberta representative as a member of the AAAL board, in November, 1992. Further involvement with the AAAL has been through a presentation at the 1992 annual general conference and as a member of the 1993 conference planning committee. This committee has provided opportunities to cultivate a greater awareness of Metis culture which in turn demonstrates the need for culturally appropriate learning materials.

Through the LCA network, contact with literacy coordinators throughout Alberta is easily made for information sharing. This was demonstrated by the areas represented in a Family Literacy Training held in Brooks, Alberta. Coordinators from several regions of Alberta were made aware of this training through the LCA network. This intensive 3 day training was the catalyst for the development of a proposal for a family literacy program designed to meet the needs of the Metis community in Edmonton.

Nationally, information sharing has been maintained with several literacy groups. Presentations were made by the Metis Nation at the annual conference of the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, the Stony Mountain Institution - Manitoba, The Native Literacy Training Event - Kelowna, and a conference sponsored by Concordia University in Montreal. For a complete listing of memberships held to ensure information sharing please see Appendix D.

Target education committees and working groups in each zone for consultation

This objective was met through community workshops and consultation with individual community members. Community workshops provided the avenue to share information and statistics on the severity of the problem and its impact on individuals, families and larger organizations.

Participants were provided with the opportunity to share their personal needs and interests privately. The needs of the community were discussed collectively, which encouraged participation.

Encourage participation in existing literacy programs by the Metis community

This objective was met in three ways; through literacy awareness workshops (information about existing community programs is provided), direct referral (prospective tutors/students are referred to programs presently operating within their community) and the modelling of participation by liaison with existing programs by the coordinator (regular involvement with other coordinators, literacy groups, etc. increases the visibility of these groups within the Metis community).

Resource people to be identified - Metis instructors, tutors, senators (Elders) and other community resource people

Networking has been vital to meeting this objective. A list[1] has been compiled of resource people identified. These resources; both individuals and organizations, collectively offer an immense knowledge of and desire to assist, the Metis community.

Adapt learning materials and other resources used by other Aboriginal groups to develop a collection that can be utilized to meet the needs of the Metis population

The project has been successful in developing three booklets and a video to compliment them. Each booklet can be used independently or in conjunction with the video, as can the video be used alone or in conjunction with the booklets. This flexibility broadens their appeal and will draw audiences/readers from literacy projects, public and separate schools plus individuals and groups interested in Metis history and culture. Titles and topics of each booklet are as follows;

Metis Beginnings:	Provides a brief look at the origins of the Metis Nation.
Snapshots... of Metis Culture:	Offers a brief look at the culture of the Metis.

[1] See Appendix C

Remarkable Metis: This booklet provides short biographies of remarkable Metis people.

Cost shared programs to be implemented with interested organizations

This objective was met through the sharing of time and resources. Results of MNA initiatives were freely shared with other groups for maximum benefit and cost effectiveness.

One of the needs identified early in this phase of the project was the need for an established training program for new literacy coordinators. The Metis Nation of Alberta developed a work plan to achieve this. One of the steps within the plan resulted in a DACUM (acronym for design a curriculum). A one day workshop to create an outline for a curriculum which would cover the necessary areas of training for new coordinators was hosted by the MNA. This outline has been shared with the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta for use as a resource in an initiative they have undertaken to standardize training for literacy coordinators. See Appendix E for DACUM profile.

The Alberta Association for Adult Literacy was able to use the annotated bibliography compiled by the Metis Nation of Alberta during Phase II of the literacy project extensively in the compilation of their own bibliography.

The Metis & Indian Youth START project, initiated by Metis Child & Family services to keep junior high school students in school, and the literacy project worked together to encourage students to remain in school. Joint visits to inner city schools were successful, showing promise for future initiatives.

Yesteryears successes built upon and furthered

Established liaisons with literacy groups were maintained and strengthened. The success of these liaisons enabled the Metis Nation of Alberta to advocate more effectively for Metis people.

The research, knowledge and material developed/accumulated during the length of the project has been used in the development of culturally appropriate learning materials and to develop realistic plans for the long term.

Resources identified as being appropriate for use by/for aboriginal people can be easily accessed through the MNA annotated bibliography.

Appendix A

Foundation Principles of the Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project

Belief Statement

The Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project believes that Metis people should have the opportunity to improve their literacy skills while maintaining and promoting their cultural identity.

Vision Statement

The vision of the Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project is to empower Metis people, through increased literacy skills, to create and achieve their goals and visions.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project is to raise the literacy skills of Metis people in the province of Alberta.

Target Statement

The Metis people within the province of Alberta are the primary clients of the Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project.

Statements of Aim

The aims of the Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project are;

to provide Metis people within the province of Alberta with literacy programs designed for and operated by Metis people

to provide resources which will assist others in increasing the literacy skills of Metis people

to create an awareness of the unique culture of the Metis people

to break the cycle of illiteracy within the Metis community

Appendix B

Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project
Impact Evaluation

One of the aims of the Metis Nation of Alberta Literacy Project is to create an awareness of the unique culture of the Metis people. To help us determine our success in this area and to provide a benchmark for future evaluations the following questionnaire has been developed.

Please take a few minutes to complete it and drop it in the mail. A self-addressed postage paid envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

1. Has contact with the Metis Nation of Alberta's Literacy project made you more aware of the Metis people as having a distinct culture?

   In what way/s?

2. Has this contact increased your awareness of the Metis community as being separate from the Native community?

3. Are you satisfied with your knowledge of the Metis community?

4. Given your present knowledge of Metis culture what type of resources do you feel would enable you to reach/serve the Metis community more effectively?

5. Additional comments.

Appendix C

Metis Nation of Alberta Association

For further information/assistance contact the office nearest you.

Metis Nation of Alberta Association
Head Office
13140 St. Albert Trail
Edmonton, Alberta
T5L 4R8
Telephone: 455-2200

Metis Nation of Alberta Association
Zone One
Box 1350
Lac La Biche, Alberta
T0A 2C0
Telephone: 623-3039

Metis Nation of Alberta Association
Zone Two
Box 6497
Bonnyville, Alberta
T9N 2H1
Telephone: 826-7483

Metis Nation of Alberta Association
Zone Three
Bay #7, 3140 - 14 Avenue NE
Calgary, Alberta
T2A 6J4
Telephone: 569-8800

Metis Nation of Alberta Association
Zone Four
13140 St. Albert Trail
Edmonton, Alberta
T5L 4R8
Telephone: 451-3170

Metis Nation of Alberta Association
Zone Five
Box 1787
Slave Lake, Alberta
T0G 2A0
Telephone: 849-2890

Metis Nation of Alberta Association
Zone Six
Kit Business Centre
2nd Floor, 9709B 100 Street
Peace River, Alberta
T8S 1J7
Telephone: 624-4219

Senate of the Metis Nation of Alberta

Fred L'Hirondelle
Chairman, Metis Senate
464 Kirkpatrick Crescent
Edmonton, Alberta
T6L 5P1

Thelma Chalifoux
Co-Chairman, Metis Senate
General Delivery
Morinville, Alberta
T0C 1P0

Robert Boucher
Metis Senator
Box 894
Lac La Biche, Alberta
T0A 2C0

Fred Bourque
Metis Senator
Box 68
Anzac, Alberta
T0P 1J0

Lloyd Poitras
Metis Senator
Box 58
Elk Point, Alberta
T0S 1A0

Sam Dumais
Metis Senator
Box 7402
Bonnyville, Alberta
T9N 2H7

Chester Charles
Metis Senator
Box 362
High Level, Alberta
T0H 1Z0

Sophie Hiebert
Metis Senator
59 Falmead Road, N.E.
Calgary, Alberta
T3J 1G7

Myles Norris
Metis Senator
11725 - 87 St.
Edmonton, Alberta
T5B 3M8

Delia Gray
Metis Senator
206, 10145 - 119 St.
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 1Z2

Mabel Courtorielle
Metis Senator
General Delivery
Slave Lake, Alberta
T0G 2A0

Norman Lacombe
Metis Senator
700 - 12 Street S.E.
Slave Lake, Alberta
T0G 2A0

Resources Within Alberta

Anne Anderson
Historian
Anne Anderson Metis Cultural Centre
13140 St. Albert Trail
Edmonton, Alberta
T5L 4R8

Wil Campbell
Film maker
Gemini Productions Limited
10846 - 21 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T6J 5S2

Ron Gauthier
Production Coordinator
Native Network News
13140 St. Albert Trail
Edmonton, Alberta
T5L 4R8

Terry Lusty
Historian, writer
Freelance
14545 - 26 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5Y 1W6

Metis Child & Family Services
10950 - 124 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5M 0H6

Ivan Plante, Coordinator
START Program
10950-124 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5M 0H6

Bryan Fayant
Provincial Strategy Coordinator
Metis Child & Family Services
13140 St. Albert Trail
Edmonton, Alberta
T5L 4R8

Jane Sager
Native Communications Program
Grant MacEwan Community College
10045 - 156 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5P 2P7

Doreen L'Hirondelle
Aboriginal Specialist, Education
Calgary Board of Education
#10, 1716 - 10th Ave., SW
Calgary, Alberta
T3C 0J8

Robert Reiter
Director
First Nations Resource Council
Centre for Legal Research
#604, 10080 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 1V9

Carl Fontaine
Artist
Native Heroes Newspaper
#600 10105 - 109 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 1C3

Henry Letendre
Artist
10616 - 156 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5P 2S1

Darren Forseille
Student of Native Studies
#1401, 10125 - 109 St.
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3P1

Mickey Lamouche
AVC, Lesser Slave Lake
Box 1280
Slave Lake, Albert
T0G 2A0

Alberta Metis Women
13140 St. Albert Trail
Edmonton, Alberta
T5L 4R8

Gaylene Whitehead
Box 5329
Peace River, Alberta
T8S 1R9

Fred MacDonald
Box 5203
Ft. McMurray, Alberta
T9H 3G3

Elmer Roy
President, Metis Local 334
Anzac, Alberta
T0P 1C0

Audrey Breaker
Program Administrator
Aboriginal Education Project
Mount Royal College
4825 Richard Road SW
Calgary, Alberta
T3E 6K6

George Calliou
Director
The Native Centre
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, Alberta
T2N 1N4

Hazel McKinnit
Community School Coordinator
Ben Calf Robe School
11833 - 64 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5W 4J2

Georgina Donald
Coordinator, Metis Dancers
Canadian Native Friendship Centre
11201 - 101 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5G 2A4

Patricia Littlechild
Ermineskin Education
P.O. Box 219
Hobbema, Alberta
T0C 1N0

Donna Leask
Instructor
Alberta Vocational College
10215 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 1L6

Resources Outside Alberta

Metis National Council
Suite 315, 50 O'Connor
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 6L2

Metis National Council of Women
Suite 310, 50 O'Connor Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 6L2

The Pacific Metis Federation
P.O. Box 40
#201 182 Harrison Avenue
Parksville, British Columbia
V9P 1Z3

Metis Nation
North West Territories
Box 1375
Yellowknife, N.W.T.
X1A 2P1

Metis Society of Saskatchewan
Robin Crescent
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7L 6M8

Ontario Metis Aboriginal Association
2nd Floor, 219
158 Sackville Road
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario
P6B 4T6

Manitoba Metis Federation
408 McGregor Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2W 4X5

Alice Lee
Author
c/o Gabriel Dumont Institute
of Native Studies and Research
121 Broadway Avenue East
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4N 0Z6

Sharon Pasula
Coordinator,
Metis Pathways Secretariat
219 Robin Crescent
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7L 6M8

Allan Tremayne, Instructor
Gabriel Dumont Institute of
Native Studies and Research
121 Broadway Avenue East
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4N 0Z6

Louise Newans
Consultant
365 Wardlaw Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3L 0L8

Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
787 Second Avenue East
Owen Sound, Ontario
N4K 2G9

Native Adult Education Resource Centre
P.O. Box 610
Salmon Arm, British Columbia
V1E 4N7

Appendix D

MEMBERSHIPS HELD:

Coordinators of Volunteers Association
Garneau P.O. Box 52085
8210-109 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2T5

Saskatchewan Literacy Network
P.O. Box 1520
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7K 3R

Literacy Coordinators of Alberta(LCA)
920 - 800 6th Avenue S.W.
Calgary, Alberta
T2P 3G3

Literacy B.C.
1128 - 510 W. Hastings Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 1L8

Movement For Canadian Literacy
#701 880 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1R 6K7

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit
Kingsbourne House
229 - 231 High Holborn
London, England WC1V7DA

ABC Canada
762 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M6J 1E9

Native Adult Education Resource Centre
P.O. Box 610
Salmon Arm, B.C.
V1E 4N7

Edmonton Adult Continuing Education
and Recreation (EACER)
#220, 10232-112 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 1M4

Northwest Adult Education Association
Representative: Dr. Wayne Lamble
Faculty of Extention
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G4

English Express
Alberta Advanced Education
Community Programs
6th floor Devonian Building
11160 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 0L3

Adult Literacy Contact Centre
#622 510 W. Hastings Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 1L8

Alberta Association for Adult Literacy(AAAL)
Peace Building
10100 - 101 Street
Grande Prairie, Alberta
T8V 2P9

Alberta Correctional Education Association
Treasurer: Lehi Heath
Lethbridge Correctional Centre
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1J 3Z3

Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
787 Second Avenue, East
Owen Sound, Ontario
N4K 2G9

Centre for Curriculum Development
and Professional Development
Development Centre
5th Floor, 1483 Douglas Street
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 3K4

racy Workers Alliance of Manitoba(LWAM)
Pulford Street
nipeg, Manitoba
1X8

Centre For Literacy
racy Across The Curriculum
0 Sherbrooke Street West
treal, Quebec
1A4

ve American Language Issues Institute
Box 963
ctaw, OK 73020
ed States

Edmonton Social Planning Council
#41, 9912-106 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 1C5

Storylinks
295 Evelyn Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M6P 2Z8

International Reading Association
800 Barksdale Road
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, Delaware
19714-8139

Appendix E

DACUM PROFILE

PURPOSE: Literacy Co-Ordinator Training Modules

Coordinators must be able to:

A	Work with Tutors	Establish ongoing recruitment of tutors A-1	Interview tutors A-2	Screen tutors A-3	Refer tutors to more appropriate programs A-4	Terminate tutors A-5	Conduct tutor orientation A-6	Train tutors A-7	Facilitate groups A-8	Match tutor with student A-9
		Listen to tutors A-11	Act as resource person A-11	Provide inservices for tutors A-12	Set up volunteer appreciation activities A-13	Conduct advocacy and political lobbying A-14	Define legal dimensions A-15			
B	Work with Students	Meet and recruit students B-1	Refer to appropriate service B-2	Provide student orientation B-3	Set goals B-4	Match students B-5	Listen B-6	Counsel B-7	Provide ongoing assessment of students B-8	Facilitate groups B-9
		Provide ongoing social activities; advocacy and students; political lobbying; liaison between student and tutor B-10								
C	Evaluate and Gather Materials	Set up a library C-1	Determine readability levels C-2	Provide ongoing evaluation of materials C-3						
D	Utilize Available Resources	Contact community agencies D-1	Conduct research D-2	Contact Metis resource people D-3	Contact elders D-4					
E	Act as Administrators	Work with Advisory Committee or groups E-1	Maintain ongoing assessment of program E-2	Set priorities E-3	Evaluate and write reports E-4	Provide follow-up E-5	Apply accounting skills E-6			

F	Network	Lobby F-1	Sit on Committees F-2	Disseminate media information F-3					
G	Ensure Personal/ Professional Development	Maintain perspective (behaviour) G-1	Act as a good role model G-2	Look after self G-3	Be creative G-4	Know when to say yes/no to priorities G-5	Delegate G-6	Write G-7	Use a computer G-8	Organize workshops and conferences G-9
H	Raise Funds	Search for potential funders H-1	Write proposals H-2	Gather demographic data H-3	Budget H-4	Provide feedback to sponsors H-5	Delegate jobs H-6			
I	Promote Good Public Relations	Write newsletters I-1	Develop agency awareness I-2	Facilitate groups I-3	Write newsletters I-4					

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